

The Holocaust

Fall 2025

MW 2:30- 3:45

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This course explores the history of the Holocaust, examining its social, cultural, and ideological origins. By focusing on the mass murder of Jews and other groups in Nazi-occupied Europe, we will shed light on the beliefs, hopes, and experiences of its victims, as well as the perspectives, emotions, and actions of the perpetrators and witnesses. Our inquiry will draw on a wide range of primary sources, including private diaries and memoirs, photographs, films, speeches, essays, short stories, and testimonies. This diverse collection of materials will enable a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of this unprecedented event in human history. While no specialized linguistic skills are required for this course, students with such abilities are encouraged to contribute their expertise.

Class time: 80% lecture, 20% discussion.

Work Load: 8-10 pages of writing per semester: two take-home exam (1-2 pages each); final paper (3-4 pages); in-class multiple-choice exam.

Office Hours

MW 1-2 pm. I strongly encourage you to come and speak with me during office hours. If you cannot see me at the posted time, please let me know by email and we can arrange another time for an appointment.

Classroom climate:

We are committed to creating a classroom environment that values the diversity of experiences and perspectives that all students bring. Students who interact with peers who are different from themselves learn new things and experience tangible educational outcomes. Please join me in creating a welcoming and vibrant classroom climate. Note that you should expect to be challenged intellectually by me and your peers, and at times this may feel uncomfortable. Indeed, it can be helpful to be pushed sometimes in order to learn and grow. But at no time in this learning process should someone be singled out or treated unequally on the basis of any seen or unseen part of their identity. If you ever have concerns in this course about harassment, discrimination, or any unequal treatment, or if you seek accommodations or resources, I invite you to share directly with me. I promise to take your communication seriously and to seek mutually acceptable resolutions and accommodations.

Use of AI Tools in This Course:

In this course, you are **allowed and even encouraged** to use generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini or others, to support your work. These tools can be valuable aids in various aspects of your academic writing. Generative AI can help you outline your paper, organize your ideas, and think through how to synthesize your knowledge effectively. You may use AI tools for language editing, such as improving grammar and refining your writing style. **If you use AI tools, you are required to disclose their use clearly.** This includes specifying the tools you used and providing the prompts you gave (e.g., as I did for this syllabus, “I used ChatGPT for language editing and asked it to help with grammar and style”).

Note that these tools also have some remarkable limitations. Generative AI tools sometimes fabricate details or provide inaccurate information. It is your responsibility to verify all information you use in your papers. Ultimately, **the work you submit must reflect your own effort and understanding.** If AI tools are used without critical engagement, the result may be a technically acceptable paper, but you will miss the deeper learning that this course is designed to foster. While you may use AI tools for structuring your paper, enhancing style and grammar, and gaining a better understanding of the materials, you are **not permitted to ask AI to write the paper for you.** Doing so, or failing to acknowledge the use of AI, will be treated as plagiarism.

This class is structured to enhance your knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, a subject of profound historical and contemporary significance. If you rely too heavily on AI tools without investing in your own study, reflection, and writing, you may achieve a satisfactory grade but will lose the opportunity to engage deeply with a fascinating and crucial topic.

Course Assignments and Grades

Grades:

The final decision on any grade derives from my global assessment of your work and cannot be quantified exactly. Roughly speaking, however, the breakdown is as follows:

50% take-home exams (25% each); 40% final paper; 10% in-class exam; participation in class discussions.

No extensions will be granted without my *prior* permission, and late papers will be graded lower at the rate of one grade-step per day (100-95-90-85, etc.).

Needless to say, complete honesty and probity in your work is a must.

1. Two short take-home essays (25% each):

Students will submit two essays (in February 28 and April 10); each essay should be 1-2 typed pages, double-spaced, font 12. The essays will be based on required readings and class discussions; I will provide the topics for the essays a week before due date. Essays should be submitted in class. See the appended grading criteria.

2. **Final (40%)**: a 3-4 double spaced typed page take-home essay. The essay is based on required readings and class discussion. See the appended grading criteria.

3. **In-Class Exam (10%)**: a Multiple-Choice exam will be held on March 5

4. **Class attendance and participation in class discussions**. You should read the assigned readings and contribute to the discussion and analysis in the classroom. While there is no formal component for engaging in discussions in class, I will take such participation into account in determining your final grade. For example, if you have a B+, I may decide to award you an A-.

Preparing for Class:

Books to purchase:

— Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

Online Reader: other than the aforementioned books, **everything you will need to read for this class is on the Canvas page of the course**. We will be using it regularly – please have it with you in class (print or e-copy)!

Class Program:

The Holocaust	
1	Holocaust and Genocide: Introduction to the main concepts and debates
Jews and anti-Semitism	
2	<p>The Origins of Modern Antisemitism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fichte, “A State Within a State”• Marr, “The Victory of Judaism”• “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” (excerpts)• Optional Reading: Oskar Panizza, “The Operated Jew”
3	<p>Jews and other Germans: Acculturation and Antisemitism before 1933</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bernstein, “How I Grew Up”• Rathenau, “Hear O Israel!”• Scholem, “The German-Jewish Symbiosis”• Optional Reading: Volkov, “Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code”
The “German Path” in Modern History	
4	<p><i>But Where is Germany?</i> Modern German History and its “Peculiarities”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• J.G. Fichte, “To the German Nation”• E.M. Arndt, “Where is the German Fatherland?”• Optional: Nielsen, <i>Between Heimat and Hatred</i> (2019), 22-37
5	<p>“Dancing on the Volcano”: Politics, Culture and Jews in the Weimar Republic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Von Hindenburg, “Stab in the Back”• Wolfradt, “Stab in the Back?”• Spengler, “The Decline of the West” (excerpts)• The Spartacus Manifesto
The Awkward Rise of the National Socialist Party	
6	<p>Hitler and the National Socialist Party before 1933: the people and their ideology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The Program of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party” (36-38)• Manifest, “Do a Proper Job on the Jews” (38-39)
7	<p><i>Machtergreifung</i>: Seizing and Maintaining Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Von Papen, “Background for the Current Crisis”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Results of the 1932 Elections • Optional: Gerwarth, <i>Hitler's Hangman</i> (2011), 50-83.
The Nazi State: Ideology and Practice (1933-1939)	
8	<p>Everyday Life in the Third Reich</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goebbels, "Our Hitler" (1935) • Collections of private photographs of German-Jews from 1933-1938 • Ditrich, "The Führer and the German People" (1935) • Optional: Sluhovski et al., Introduction to <i>Queer Jewish Life in Central Europe and Mandate Palestine</i> (2022)
9	<p>The Ideological and "Scientific" Foundations of Nazi Racism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goebbels, "Why Are We Enemies of the Jews?" (22-23) • Hitler, excerpts from "Mein Kampf" (39-41) • Selection of caricatures from <i>Der Stürmer</i>
Taking Action against the "Enemies of the Reich"	
10	<p>Concentration camps, legalization of exclusion, and "spontaneous" violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuremberg Law (and additional regulations), (48-49) • Robert Weltsch, "Wear it with Pride, the Yellow Badge" (45-46) • <i>Kristallnacht</i>, Hydrich's Instructions (55-56) • "The Public Response to <i>Kristallnacht</i>" (35) • Hitler's orders on "Euthanasia" (excerpts, <i>The Nazi Years</i>)
11	<p>Hitler's Leadership and the Outbreak of World War II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreign Policy and Hitler's Prestige: Gambling and Planning • Blitzkrieg (September 1939 to December 1941) • From Hitler's Speech, January 30, 1939 (62-63) • Hitler's Directives for the Conduct of the War, August 1, 1939 • From Hitler's Testament (66) • Optional: Kurlander, <i>Living with Hitler</i>, 81-112
East European Jewry and the Refugee Crisis of Interwar Europe	
12	<p>Jewish Life in Modern Eastern Europe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film: <i>Images before My Eyes</i> • Decisions Taken at the Evian Conference (52-54)

- “All’s Well that Ends Well”: The St. Louis Photo-Album
- Optional: Jeffrey Veidlinger, “The Scras of Revolution,” in *The Shadow of the Shtetl*

March 3, 2025, First Essay Due

- 13 The *Ghettoization* of East European Jewry
- Instructions by Hydrich Concerning the Jews in the Occupied Territories (67-70)
 - A report on the Situation of the Jews
 - Address by Rumkowski to the Judenrat in Lodz
 - A speech by Hans Frank, December 1941
 - A collection of photographs from Warsaw Ghetto, taken by German “tourists”

March 5, 2025, **In-Class Multiple Choice Exam******

Terror and Mass Murder: Under Nazi Occupation

- 14 Jewish Life under German Occupation
- Extracts from the Ghetto Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan (77-79, 83)
 - The Dilemma of the Jewish Self-Plan
 - Report of Auerswald, Commissar of Warsaw Ghetto (87-88)
 - A collection of Photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto

- 15 Death Squads and Pogroms
- Extract from Guidelines by Heydrich for SS and Police Commander
 - Excerpts from a Report by Einsatzgruppe A
 - Kershaw, “Working Towards the Führer”

From Mass Murder to the Final Solution

- 16 Who Participated in the Mass Murders, and Why?
- Browning, “One Day” (extract from *Ordinary Men*)
 - Goldhagen, Interview with Maurice Wohlgeleuter

- 17 The Decision to Exterminate the Jews: Reasons, Implications and Popular Support
- “On the Madagascar Plan” (81-82)
 - Protocol of the Wannsee Conference (89-94)
 - Signed Obligation by SS Men (99)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Order by Himmler on the Execution of the Final Solution (99-100) • Kershaw, “Fateful Choices: Hitler Decides to Kill the Jews”
18	<p>The Logistics of Mass Murder: Transports, Camps, Coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on Jewish Disbelief • Czerniakow’s Diary, on the Eve of Deportation • Film: <i>Respite</i> (1944/2008)
19	<p>The Logic and Operation of Death Camps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SS Statistics on the Final Solution • Himmler’s Speech in Poznan (Posen), “Evacuation of the Jews” • From Written Evidence of Rudolf Höss, Auschwitz
20	<p>Prisoners’ Society: the <i>Muselman</i>, the Kapo, and the Social Hierarchy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borowski, “This Way to the Gas Chamber, Ladies and Gentlemen”
<p><u>April 7, **** Second Essay Due****</u> (On Levi, <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i>)</p>	
21	<p>Daily Life in a Death Camp</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film: <i>Pizza in Auschwitz</i> (2009) • Notes of Kurt Gerstein, Belzec (112)
<p>Witnesses, Bystanders, and Accomplices</p>	
22	<p>The German Public Opinion and the Holocaust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitler Bans Public References to the Final Solution (111) • Kershaw, “German Opinion Polls, 1939-1945” • Optional: Film: <i>Wunschkonzert</i> (1940)
23	<p>Neighbors: test-cases: France / Hungary / The Netherland / Denmark / Poland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan Gross, “Jews and their Polish Neighbors” • Agamben, “The Witness,” pages 7-19 • Optional: Polonsky, “The Neighbors Respond”
<p>War, Resistance and the last phase of the Holocaust</p>	
24	<p>The war in Europe and the Defeat of Germany (December 1941 to May 1945)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goebbels Speech on Total War
25	<p>Jewish and non-Jewish Resistance</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for Resistance in Warsaw Ghetto (103-104) • Response of Commander of the AK (the Polish resistance organization, “Fatherland Army”), (104) • Report on the Revolt at Sobibor Death Camp (115-116)
26	<p>The “Death Marches” and Liberation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Testimony of Zelda Moyal • The Testimony of Samuel Beller • Optional: Blatman, <i>The Death Marches</i>, 197-245
The Memory and the “Meaning” of the Holocaust	
27	<p>Probing the Limits of Representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hirsch, <i>Afterimage</i> (Introduction) • Amery, “Torture” • Spiegelman, „Mauschwitz,“ in <i>Maus II</i>
28	<p>the Holocaust in German and North American Memory and Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welzer, “Grandpa Wasn’t a Nazi” • Interview with A. Dirk Moses (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-DefqRB418)
May 2, **** Final Essay Due****	

Addendum A: Additional Materials:

Helpful Links:

- Filmed Testimonies: <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance/multimedia.asp>
- Timeline for the Holocaust: <http://www.fcit.usf.edu/HOLOCAUST/timeline/timeline.htm>
- Yad Vashem, Israel National Holocaust Museum:
<http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/about/index.asp>
- US Holocaust Memorial Museum, D.C.: <http://www.ushmm.org/>

Highly Recommended Additional Reading:

Christopher Browning, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (2004)

Christopher Browning, *Ordinary Men* (1992)

Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939* (1997)

Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939-1945* (2007)

Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors* (2001)

Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (2008)

Thomas Weber, *Becoming Hitler* (2017)

Moshe Zimmermann, *Germans against Germans* (2024)

Addendum B: Grading criteria for essays

A: clear and comprehensive treatment of the question written in excellent expository style; work demonstrates that the student is thinking in a creative way and is making an original argument; excellent use of written sources and class discussions

B: good summary of the essential points, written in satisfactory style; arguments repeat readings and class discussions

C: only some essential points, but significant gaps; unclear writing; very partial use of readings and class discussions

D: lacking in central issues; incomprehensible writing; little evidence of familiarity with readings and class discussions